

Message Text

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PAGE 01 MOSCOW 10636 061955Z

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C O N F I D E N T I A L MOSCOW 10636

EXDIS

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PINT, UR

SUBJECT: ANDREY AMALRIK VERSUS THE SYSTEM

REF: MOSCOW 10449

1. SUMMARY. AMALRIK IS FIGHTING THE BUREAUCRACY TO THE LAST, CURRENTLY IN AN EFFORT TO TAKE WITH HIM SOME OBJECTS OF PRIMARILY SENTIMENTAL VALUE. WHETHER HE WINS OR LOSES, WE EXPECT THE AMALRIKS TO HAVE LEFT THE USSR WITHIN TWO WEEKS. END SUMMARY.

2. ANDREY AMALRIK'S BATTLE TO LEAVE THE USSR UNDER CONDITIONS FAVORABLE TO HIM CONTINUES. HIS EXIT VISA HAS NOW BEEN EXTENDED TO JULY 15, AND HE HAS BEEN INFORMALLY TOLD THAT HE WILL BE ABLE TO HAVE IT EXTENDED A SECOND TIME SHOULD THAT BECOME NECESSARY. HE HAS ALSO WON THE BATTLE TO LEAVE THE SOVIET UNION AND PROCEED DIRECTLY TO THE NETHERLANDS RATHER THAN TRANSITING VIENNA AS MOST EMIGRANTS FOR ISRAEL AND OBLIGED TO DO. ON THE OTHER HAND, HE HAS CONCEDED DEFEAT ON HIS ATTEMPT TO FLY VIA KLM RATHER THAN AEROFLOT.

3. AMALRIK'S PRESENT BATTLE PITS HIM AGAINST THE CUSTOMS AND MINISTRY OF CULTURE AND APPEARS, IMPROBABLE AS IT MAY SEEM, TO ALLY HIM WITH THE KGB. AMALRIK HAS STEADILY ERODED THE MINCULT POSITION, WHICH BEGAN BY REFUSING HIM PERMISSION TO EXPORT SEVERAL MODERN PAINTINGS, TWO ICONS, A SAMOVAR, AND SOME CARVED WOODEN OBJECTS. THEY HAVE ACCEPTED THAT HE MAY EXPORT EVERYTHING

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 02 MOSCOW 10636 061955Z

BUT THE ICON, FOR WHICH THEY HAVE OFFERED HIM 2,000 RUBLES.

THEY HAVE SAID THAT THE EXPORT FEE FOR THE OTHER OBJECTS
WILL COME TO 1,500 RUBLES.

4. AMALRIK HAS REFUSED THIS AND CALLED "HIS" KGB CONTACT AND
DEMANDED THAT THE KGB INTERCEDE WITH THE CUSTOMS. THE KGB OFFICER
APPARENTLY AGREED THAT HE WOULD CALL BACK WITHIN AN HOUR. HE
DID SO AND ASSURED AMALRIK THAT IF HE WOULD PACK ALL OF THE OBJECTS
IN HIS SUITCASE KGB OFFICIALS AT THE AIRPORT WOULD ASSURE THAT
THEY ALL LEFT. MUNCULT, HOWEVER, AND CUSTOMS APPARENTLY DID NOT
GET THE WORD SINCE EACH LATER CALLED TO SAY THAT THEIR POSITION
HAD NOT CHANGED.

5. AMALRIK THEN TELEPHONED THE KGB AGAIN AND, FINDING HIS OWN
AGENT WAS OUT, GOT TO TALK TO HIS SUPERVISOR. TO THE LATTER HE
SAID, "DO YOU REALLY MEAN THAT THE 'COMPETENT ORGANS' ARE UNABLE
TO CHANGE THE DECISION OF A SECOND-RATE, UNIMPORTANT BUREAUCRACY
SUCH AS THE MINISTRY OF CULTURE?" THE KGB OFFICER'S REPLY WAS
EVIDENTLY NOT SATISFACTORY, AND AMALRIK SAID THAT HE WAS GOING
TO TELEPHONE THE MINISTRY OF CULTURE AND INFORM THEM THAT THE
KGB HAD AGREED TO LET ALL OF THE OBJECTS OUT AND THE MINISTRY
OF CULTURE WAS TO COMPLY WITH THIS DECISION. APPARENTLY, THE
KGB OFFICER CONVINCED AMALRIK THAT THIS WOULD NOT BE A SUCCESSFUL
COURSE OF ACTION, AND AMALRIK CONCLUDED THAT CONVERSATION BY
SAYING THAT IN THAT CASE HE WAS PREPARED TO STAY IN MOSCOW UNTIL
SUCH TIME AS HE COULD LEAVE ON HIS OWN TERMS.

6. AMALRIK IS NOW COMMITTED AND IF HE DOES NOT GET OUT ON THAT
DATE UNTIL THE FIFTEENTH. HE IS NOT SATISFIED WITH THE SUCCESSES
HE HAS THUS FAR WON AND CLAIMS THAT THE KGB WANTS HIM OUT OF THE
COUNTRY SO BADLY THAT THEY WILL EVENTUALLY PREVAIL OVER THE
MINISTRY OF CULTURE.

7. AMALRIK HAS A LONG HISTORY OF BEARDING SOVIET AUTHORITIES
AND IS AN EXTREMELY STUBBORN AND OBSTINATE INDIVIDUAL. WHILE
HE MAY YET BE ABLE TO GET ALL OF THE CONTENTIOUS OBJECTS OUT WITH
HIM, WE THINK IT QUITE LIKELY THAT HE WILL LOSE THIS LAST BATTLE.
HE HAS TOLD US THAT HE IS WEARY OF HIS LONG WAR WITH SOVIET
OFFICIALDOM, AND HAS DECIDED TO LEAVE WITHIN THE NEXT TWO WEEKS,
WITH OR WITHOUT HIS ART OBJECTS. HE CHEERFULLY ADMITS, HOWEVER,
THAT IT IS PRECISELY THE FACT THAT IT IS THE LAST BATTLE WITH THE
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PAGE 03 MOSCOW 10636 061955Z

SOVIET AUTHORITIES THAT MAKES HIM PREPARED TO FIGHT A LITTLE
LONGER.
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